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# **Alberta Action on Waste**

## **Waste Minimization and Recycling Development Program**

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**Alberta**



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## I Introduction

The Government of Alberta will meet the challenge of providing leadership and support on environmental issues, as the citizens of the province express increasing concern about environmental protection. One initiative is Alberta Action On Waste. This waste minimization and recycling development program is a major component of an overall waste management strategy to help Albertans achieve the protection, improvement and wise use of the environment.

In 1985, in response to growing environmental awareness, the Government of Alberta asked the Environment Council of Alberta (ECA) to conduct public hearings to find ways of encouraging recycling and reduction of waste. Part of the process involved province-wide hearings and comprehensive background studies. The ECA recommended that enhanced environmental protection could best be achieved by waste minimization and recycling. As a result, recycling initiatives were expanded, beginning in 1987. In 1990, the Government of Alberta presented its environmental vision to the public in a document entitled "Alberta's Environment Toward the 21st Century." Thousands of Albertans, responding by letter to the document's invitation to "help shape our common future," commented on ten environmental principles and thirty-seven policy statements. Recycling was identified by the respondents as one of the top environmental priorities in the province.

Alberta Action On Waste is an important step toward achieving the Government of Alberta's goal of a 50 percent reduction in municipal solid waste by the year 2000. An estimated \$400-\$500 million is spent annually on current waste disposal methods. This cost will rise, because the quantity of waste generated by Albertans is increasing each year, while the number of suitable landfill sites is diminishing. The need for a progressive program of waste reduction through recycling and other means is clear.

Actions to encourage waste minimization and recycling by the public and industry will be based on the 4Rs: the reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery of waste. Alberta Action On Waste addresses all aspects of the waste generation cycle, including the identification of waste and recyclable materials and adaptation of sound waste management methods.

Alberta Action On Waste is well balanced, promoting both environmental responsibility and economic opportunity. As a major component of an overall waste management strategy, Alberta Action On Waste will be coordinated with several other major waste management initiatives. These include the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, the Industry-Based Scrap Tire Processing Program, the National Packaging Protocol, the Pesticide Container Collection Program and the Beverage Container Recovery System. All of these initiatives demonstrate the Government of Alberta's solid commitment to sustainable development.

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- II Objective** The objective of Alberta Action On Waste is to help achieve a 50 percent reduction in municipal solid waste by the year 2000. This goal was established by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME). Actions to achieve this will be based on the reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery of waste and sustainable development practices.

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### **III Other Recycling and Waste Management Initiatives in Alberta**

The Government of Alberta, which established Canada's first Department of Environment in 1971, has developed a two-tiered waste management system. The first tier ensures the proper handling, treatment and disposal of hazardous and special waste. The second encourages the reduction of waste and the recycling of waste materials. Environmental protection initiatives developed over the past twenty years include:

#### **Beverage Container Recovery System**

Alberta's beverage container collection system, introduced in 1972-73 and expanded in 1989, ensures that an equitable system of deposits and collection facilities minimizes the creation of litter through improper disposal of beverage containers. Alberta's 200 beverage container depots recover approximately 80 percent of the beverage containers covered under the legislation.

#### **Resource Recovery Grant Program**

Since 1976, this program has provided start-up capital funding for more than 200 community-based recycling projects to municipalities and non-profit groups.

#### **Alberta Waste Materials Exchange**

One man's gold is another man's garbage, and this exchange, established in 1985, ensures that waste materials that may be useless to one business find their way to other businesses, where they may be used as feedstock for recycling.

#### **Swan Hills Special Waste Treatment Centre**

Most hazardous waste in the province is safely destroyed at Alberta's state-of-the-art Swan Hills Special Waste Treatment Centre, constructed in 1985. Organic wastes such as oil, solvents and PCBs are treated by high temperature incineration. Inorganic wastes such as sludges and acids are treated by physical/chemical processes including oxidation. Solid residues are rendered inert and placed in a secure landfill, while residual liquids from the on-site waste treatment operations are deposited in a deep well isolated from any aquifer.

#### **Pesticide Container Collection Program**

In place since 1989, this program ensures that used pesticide containers are collected at 108 permanent locations throughout the province, then thoroughly cleaned and disposed of in a safe manner.

#### **National Packaging Protocol**

In March 1990 the Government of Alberta, through its membership in the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME), endorsed the National Packaging Protocol. The Protocol establishes policies for the management of packaging and sets waste minimization targets, starting in 1992, to achieve a substantial overall reduction in the amount of packaging that enters landfills by 2000.

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**Environmental  
Protection and  
Enhancement Act**

This proposed legislation, introduced for public comment in 1990, consolidates nine existing acts to allow an integrated approach to the environment, rather than independent management of air, water and land. It sets the framework for waste minimization and recycling initiatives. The Act provides for establishment of a legislated environmental impact assessment process, increased public consultation, effective enforcement and increased penalties, requirements for waste reduction and recycling, 25-year owner or operator liability for site clean-up and reclamation costs, and the liability of corporate officers and directors for environmental offences.

**Industry-Based  
Scrap Tire Pro-  
cessing Program**

Announced on January 15, 1991, this industry-based program is designed to determine an economically and environmentally sound method of disposing of Alberta's scrap tires.

**Government  
Procurement of  
Environmentally  
Responsible  
Products**

The Government of Alberta, through Public Works, Supply and Services, is introducing more and more environmentally friendly products to government departments. Over fifty types and styles of such products are now available, from recycled office papers to recharged printer cartridges.

**Asphalt Recycling**

Alberta Transportation and Utilities recycles highway asphalt by milling existing pavement and mixing it with new materials. Almost 500,000 tonnes of recycled asphalt has been produced during the past several construction seasons.

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**IV      Alberta  
Action on  
Waste —  
Program  
Implementation**

Alberta Action On Waste is a new environmental protection initiative, designed to be an integral part of Alberta's comprehensive waste management strategy. The following elements of the Alberta Action On Waste program will commence during fiscal year 1991/92. These will build on or dovetail with existing initiatives and programs in order to achieve the goal of a 50 percent reduction in municipal solid waste by the year 2000.

**Municipal Waste  
Action Initiative**

The Municipal Waste Action Initiative includes two major initiatives: the Municipal Funding Initiative and the Resource Reclamation Initiative.

**Municipal Funding Initiative**

▪ **Resource Recovery Grant Program**

Funding will be increased for this fiscal year to meet current demands on the program, which is increasingly popular. Since 1976, start-up capital funding for more than 200 recycling projects has been provided to municipalities and non-profit groups.

▪ **Regional Integrated Waste Management Planning**

Support will be provided to municipalities for long-term waste management planning. This will build on the existing approach to regional waste management in Alberta, pioneered by the Waste Management Assistance Program.

▪ **Capital Assistance Program**

Support will be provided to municipalities to implement integrated regional waste management plans.

▪ **Municipal Waste Management Information Exchange**

An exchange will be established to enable the sharing of waste management information. The exchange will identify opportunities for waste materials markets; provide an exchange of waste management information; and support the use of recycled materials. This exchange will be similar in concept to the Alberta Waste Materials Exchange established by Alberta Environment in 1985.

▪ **Waste Minimization and Recycling Demonstration Projects**

Projects to demonstrate the suitability or acceptability of certain leading-edge technologies will be funded. This initiative will encourage the ongoing development of expertise in recycling and will be undertaken in partnership with other agencies and institutions where possible.

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### **Resource Reclamation Initiative**

- The Alberta Government will assist municipalities in finding solutions to the perennial problems caused by stockpiling specific waste products, identified as priority wastes. A major initiative in this area is the Industry-Based Scrap Tire Processing Program, announced in January 1991. This is the first of a planned series of resource reclamation projects designed to properly dispose of large volumes of stockpiled wastes.

### **Industry and Market Development Initiative**

#### **▪ New Products, Production & Process Technology**

Alberta will continue to encourage businesses to develop new products and technology which will broaden the "environmentally friendly" product base of the province. Coordinated through the Industry Development Branch of Alberta Economic Development and Trade, such initiatives will help diversify Alberta's economy.

#### **▪ Market Intelligence**

Information gathering activities focussing on market research will be supported, since determining potential market size, quality requirements and barriers to entry are important in developing commercially viable products.

### **Industrial Waste Action Initiative**

#### **▪ Inventories of Industrial Waste Generation**

Inventories of industrial waste generation will be enhanced to form the basis for the development of long-term waste minimization and recycling management strategies.

#### **▪ Waste Minimization Assessment Manuals**

The manuals will identify the latest waste minimization strategies to enable small to medium size businesses to develop their own waste minimization plans.

### **Information for Albertans**

#### **▪ Education Resources**

Educational resources on waste management will be developed and provided to teachers from kindergarten up to grade 12, as well as to community educators. Resources for the schools will match the core curriculum if possible and be grade-specific and multi-disciplinary. All resources will be distributed through workshops.

#### **▪ Telephone Inquiry Service**

This toll-free 1-800 number will provide a quick and reliable source of information or referral on waste management and recycling questions.